Weekend MAGAZINE SECTION 2

WOMAN IN THE NEWS:

MRS. WILLIAM MANCHESTER

Some Things Just Never Mattered

By ARTHUR GREENSPAN

Middletown, Conn.

THERE'S A BIRTHDAY party this afternoon at 115 High St. in Middletown, Conn., for tiny, long-haired, blonde Laurie, the third and youngest child of Bill and Judy Manchester. "Just a few little friends," said Judy this week as she got ready to go out and buy the party things.

In short, things are returning to normal for the woman whose husband has been the center of one of the major controversies of this decade, "The Battle of the Book" between author William Manchester on one side and Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy on the other.

There were hospitalizations for the author, hiding in out-of-the-way places, tense emotional dramas on many stages. And to the house on High St. came the nations' reporters, in person and by telephone, to be met by a Judy Manchester who seemed blunt, disorganized. Her blue jeans, unkempt red hair and curt "I don't know" would be all one could get from her in a 30-second or minute-long interview.

But there is another Judy Manchester, warm, bright, interesting, a woman whose acquaintance is worth cultivating, but whose natural shyness makes her hard to know. Her friends, and she has many, will tell you:

"She has one of the quickest, brightest minds I've known, a direct kind of forthrightness without coy femininity."

"A very good person, someone who truly cares about people."

"Wonderful with children. Teenagers will tell her things they'd never tell their own parents."

Judy Manchester was the "front" for her husband. As one friend recalls, she "held up very well during the great trials they had, and found strength to protect her husband when it had to be done."

"Like Jackie Kennedy," said another friend, "she had this deep reserve of strength and knew that when you have to do certain things, you do them . . . Her prime concern was for Bill, will always be for Bill."

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The comparison to Mrs. Kennedy is intriguing in the light of one recent statement attributed to Judy Manchester. "I feel very sorry for Mrs. Kennedy," a newspaperwoman quoted her as saying.

"I didn't say that at all," said Judy this week as she sat in a comfortable living room chair and virtually chain-smoked her Kools.

"I never said I was sorry for Jackie. What I said was that I'd feel sorry for any woman with two children who lost her husband and went through what she had to go through.

"I don't know her. I don't live in her world. She doesn't live in mine. It's not in my realm. I never met her, but I saw her once at Hyannis. She was driving off in a car.

"But I think Ethel Kennedy's great. A very warm, human person. I had coffee with her one morning at Hyannis, and I saw her again at Hickory Hill. She's great."

If one would draw a comparison between Judy Manchester and Jacqueline Kennedy, the differences would be clear-cut. Jackie was the nation's

fashion-setter. Judy shops in Hartford, Conn., and couldn't care less about her clothes. ("I've never bought a thing in any of those New York stores.")

The "Jackie look" sent millions of women to beauty shops to have their hair restyled. Not Judy Manchester. "Until we spent a year in Washington, while Bill was working on the book, I never went to a beauty shop at all. And now I go maybe once a month, if I can squeeze in the time." There's no polish on her nails, either. "I don't use it."

Tall (5-feet-8) and slender (135 pounds), Judy Manchester was born Julia Brown Marshall in Baltimore 45 years ago next month. Father was Dr. Eli Kennerly Marshall, a well-known professor of pharmacology and experimental therapeutics at Johns Hopkins University. Mother was a psychiatrist, and as one friend put it, "she brought Judy up with a permissiveness which was before its time, and in an atmosphere where careers and ideas were important, not the acquisition of material things."

Because of this, says the friend, the money Manchester is expected to earn from his book, "The Death of a President" will probably have little if any effect on the way Judy and Bill Manchester live.

Judy—"nobody's ever called me Julia since college, except Time magazine"—was a World War II graduate of Wellesley, who came to Manhattan in the fall of 1943 to do graduate work at Teachers College of Columbia University.

"While I was taking my master's, I did my practice teaching at Benjamin Franklin HS. I taught history. They called it social studies. It was a tough school even then, but there were some marvelous kids. And the next year, after I graduated, I did reverse commuting—living in New York and traveling to the suburbs. I worked in Dumont, N. J., a stuffy little suburban town. Then in the summer of 1945, they lowered the age for Red Cross girls from 25 to 23, and I signed up for overseas duty." She was sent to France and then Germany.

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Returning to Baltimore in 1947, she was at a cocktail party that March when an assistant managing editor at the Baltimore Sun offered her a job at the paper "because I could type. He said he could always use someone to write up the handouts, the news releases people send to papers."

Bill joined the paper that September, Judy recalls, and they quickly started dating. They were married the following March.

Judy went back to teaching "because the Sun had a rule about people being married and working there," and she recalls the drive with which Manchester approached his writing after he had embarked on his first book. "He worked for the afternoon Sun, during the day, came home for supper, and then from 7 o'clock until midnight, he wrote—six nights a week. Saturday was the only day he took off. It was really incredible the way he disciplined himself. He never let anything interfere."

Finally, the first book came out, "Disturber of the Peace," about H. L. Mencken, the famed Baltimore newspaperman, whom Manchester greatly admired, and who was responsible for bringing the author to The Sun. "We were naive, oh, so naive. We thought good book reviews meant everything. When Bill's book came out (it was published by Harpers, you know) Bill called me to read me a review. Richard Rovere had given it a rave in The New Yorker, and he read it to me. 'Great review,' he said, 'we're made.' We thought we were made for life. We could never understand why the book didn't sell as well as the reviews."

(Rovere's review of Manchester's latest book, also in The New Yorker, is not that friendly.)

Eventually, the Sun sent Manchester to New Delhi for six months, "but they wouldn't let wives go." While he was abroad, "I took the Great Books course in the main library, near my parents' home, and became active in the League of Women Voters" (an activity she has continued in Middletown). Then Manchester left the Sun to write books and magazine articles, and she went back to teaching.

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It was July 1, 1954, that the Manchesters' moved to Middletown, where he had gotten a job editing school publications. "We were able to buy this house soon after we came here, but we had to agree to keep the boarder, a graduate assistant. He lived upstairs, where Bill now has his study, for three years."

Manchester wrote and Judy became active in the community. Their first child, John Kennerly, was growing—he's now 16, Julie, now 9½, was not yet born. And Judy, as a member of the League of Women Voters, sought and found a cause—redevelopment. Middletown was remaking itself, and Judy worked for passage of a bond issue. She also took part in other League campaigns.

Judy believes women should become involved in politics, in partisan politics. She herself has been described as "Baltimore Democratic liberal, not doctrinaire, but quite liberal."

She worked for Franklin Roosevelt's election in 1944—"I was 21 and it was the first time I could vote. I'd waited so long." In 1952, she worked for Stevenson in Baltimore—"addressed envelopes, rang doorbells, rounded up uncommitted voters, poll-watched, you know the kind of thing."

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During the past few months, the "Book" crisis has kept Judy from one of her favorite hobbies — reading. "I read very fast, probably two or three books a week. Bill and I don't read the same things. I read fast, but can't remember. He reads very slowly, but will remember things verbatim years from now. And he reads things like German history for relaxation.

"He does read an occasional suspense novel though. It's almost the only kind of fiction he reads."

Next big item for the Manchester family is their new home. Wesleyan University last year bought their property for campus expansion, and they'll build a modern-style house nearby. There'll be a room for Judy to indulge another hobby, making pottery. Coffee mugs, lamps and dozens of other things around the house were made by Judy. And now, too, perhaps she'll have a chance for another hobby—duplicate bridge. "I haven't played a game in five weeks now."

While Judy plans the house, Manchester keeps working on his book about the Krupp empire in Germany, the volume he laid aside to do the book on the assassination.

Judy was talking about the recently revealed difficulties of the Krupp industrial empire, which is being taken out of Krupp family control for the first time in history.

"It's a good thing Bill's book on the Krupps didn't come out when it was scheduled to," she said wryly. "If it had, they'd have blamed Bill for that, too."